

10/673,954
END5208USNPRemarks

Status of Claims:

Claims 10-12, 14, and 19 were rejected. Claims 10-12 and 15 have been canceled. Claims 6, 14, 16, and 18 have been amended. Specifically, claim 6 has been amended to correct an inadvertent typographical error. Claim 14 has been amended to recite the subject matter previously recited in claim 15. Claims 16 and 18 have each been amended to depend directly from amended claim 14. All of the amendments are fully supported by the specification, claims, and figures as originally filed. No new matter is believed or intended to be involved.

In the Office Action dated 03/17/2006, claims 10-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Houser in view of Adams (6,632,227). Claims 14 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Adams in view of Hibner (6,981,949). Claims 1-9 were allowed. Claims 15-18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant appreciates the Office's indication that claims 1-9 are allowable. Applicant further appreciates the Office's indication that claims 15-18 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, claims 10-12 have been canceled, and claim 14 has been amended to recite the subject matter previously recited in claim 15 (which has been canceled). Independent claim 14 should therefore be in condition for allowance.

All rejected claims have been canceled or amended to incorporate allowable subject matter. Applicant further notes that the dependent claims include additional limitations not taught or suggested in the art of record, thus forming independent basis for novelty and non-obviousness. While Applicant has elected to accept the allowed subject matter, please do not misconstrue such acceptance as an acquiescence to the merits of the rejections. Instead, this amendment merely marks a decision to obtain patent protection on the allowed subject matter without further prosecution in the present application. Applicant traverses the rejections and reserves all rights and arguments.

Based on the foregoing, all pending claims are in a condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and an early notice of allowance.